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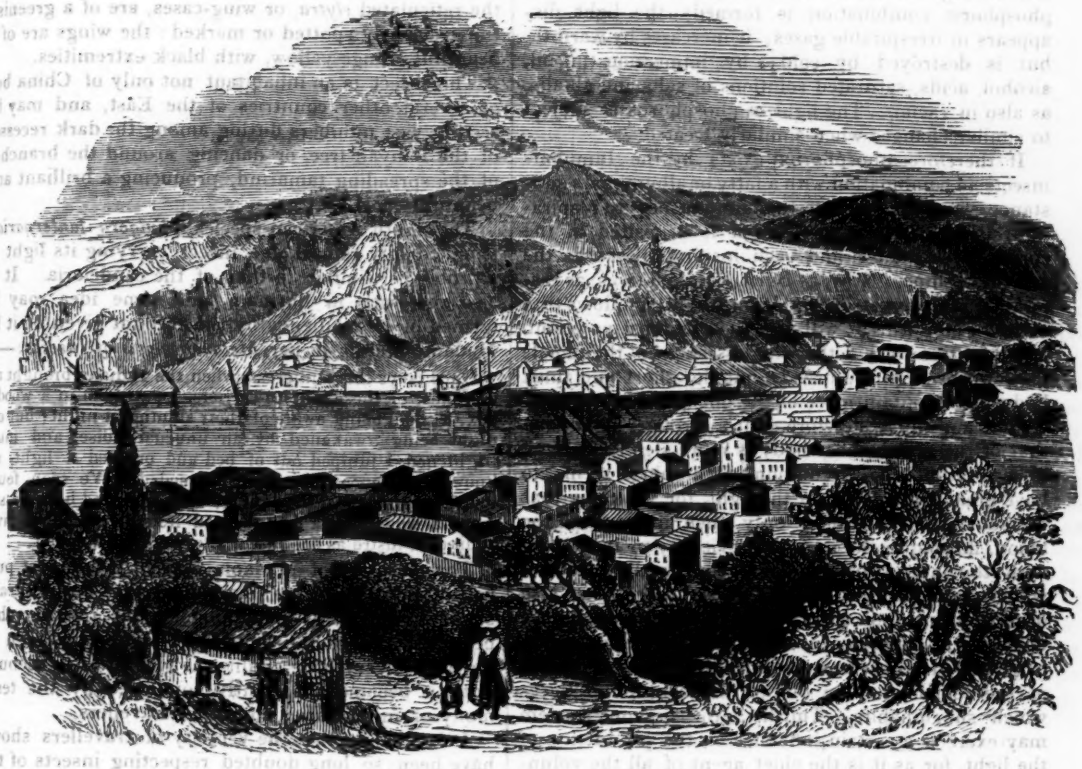
THE IONIAN ISLANDS.



PORT VATHI, CAPITAL OF ITHACA.

No. VI.

ITHACA AND SANTA MAURA.

Ithaca, called *Thiaka* by some, is supposed to be the Ithaca of Homer, the birth-place and patrimonial kingdom of Ulysses. It is of an irregular shape, about eighteen miles long, and with a breadth varying from a mile and a half to five miles. It is distant from the mainland of Greece about fifteen miles at the nearest point. It has been described, from its peculiar form, as consisting of two large masses of mountain, united by a third smaller mass: indeed the whole island is a mass of mountains, running nearly east and west, of which Mount Stephanos and Mount Neritos are the two highest points.

Neither rivers, lakes, marshes, nor any collection of water, (accidental deposits for rain excepted,) are to be found in the island. The wells are partly supplied from springs, and partly from rain: some of the springs are very copious, and one on the coast is celebrated in the pages of antiquity as the fountain of Arethusa. The climate is mild; and a refreshing westerly breeze generally sets in about midday. The soil of the island is principally patches interspersed among the crevices of the rocks, and the confined valleys between the mountains. The agriculture is very primitive, and indeed the nature of the soil does not seem to require or admit of more than scratching by a rude island plough, before throwing in the seed, or else turning it up with a hoe: this last instrument is most commonly used for clearing the roots of the vines, for the purpose of weeding, or applying manure and water. The seed-time is about November, and the grain is all gathered in by the end of June. The produce raised is similar to that of the other islands: the oil, wine, and currants, are more than sufficient for the wants of the inhabitants; they therefore export; but there is not sufficient of any other kind of food. Among the products of the island, we may mention the oak, which produces the *valonia:* it is to be lamented, as Mr. Kendrick remarks, that a sufficient quantity of it cannot be grown to make it an article of commerce. The valonia is the husk of the acorn, reduced afterwards to a powder, and used by woolen-dyers to retain the colour in cloth. There is, as has been observed, not sufficient grown at Ithaca to enable the inhabitants to export it, although considerable quantities are annually shipped from other ports of the Mediterranean.

The inhabitants, rather more than 8000 in number, live in one town, and four villages. The town called Vathi, or Bathi, is built along the shore of the harbour, partly on ground recovered from the sea, partly on the edge of an alluvial valley which lies at the bottom of the harbour, and partly on the rocky cliffs overhanging the water. The houses are principally of stone and are generally insulated, but they are

rudely put together, and penetrable to every blast. The ground-floors of those built near the sea, and at the edge of the valley, are said to be very damp after heavy rains, especially as some of them are so injudiciously placed as mechanically to obstruct the passage of the rain-water into the sea. The streets, of which the principal one is nearly a mile long, are well paved and remarkably clean. It is considered the healthiest town in the island; and contains between two and three thousand inhabitants. Three of the four villages before alluded to, are on the sides of the mountains, and the other one is on the sea-shore: the houses in all are built of stone, and all have a southern aspect.

The Ithacans are hardy sailors, and, in proportion to the size of their island, have a good deal of shipping. The boys, of every description, go to school, where they are taught to repeat prayers, to sing hymns, and to read and write: the latter two, however, with so little care, that their progress is such as to be of little service in after life:—indeed it is said, that the parents have so little control over their sons, that very often, instead of being at school, they are gambling. Females are taught nothing but to knit and sew, together with crossing themselves at certain hours, according to the ritual of their church.

Mr. Scott has given a curious picture of the mode of mourning the death of a friend at Ithaca. When any one dies, the nearest female relation sets up a shrill scream, and every woman within hearing of her, young or old, frail or strong, throws down her work, however pressing it may be, and starts for the scene of lamentation, to join in the general howl, till the house is filled. When they are tired of crying for their nearest and dearest relations last dead, and of sending embassies to them by the departed spirit of the deceased, they retire to make room for a new set to offer their condolence in the same way, to the wife, mother, or whatever relative she may be, who, though already worn out, must again pull her hair and scream with every fresh party. This lasts, (after the first two or three days,) at intervals of twenty-four hours at first, then a week, then a month, and at last a year. There is therefore always one of the howlings to be heard in some one of its stages, and none of the near relations must appear in public with a contented face for months, nor the mother or the wife of the deceased be ever seen to smile again, at the risk of losing her fair reputation; so that, on the whole, it is a rare thing to meet with a lively air of contentment among the females of this island. The males do not enter into these noisy lamentations, but they must shut themselves up for a month, without washing or shaving; they however beguile the time by snuffing and smoking, of which they are inordinately fond.

There are many memorials of early times to be found at Ithaca, which have induced Sir William Gell to consider it the scene of many of the exploits celebrated by Homer. Previously to entering the inner harbour, which is a recess of the great port Molo upon the left-hand side, a little bay with an insulated rock in front presents itself, called the bay of Dexia. It is usually visited from town by a short walk round the curve of the beach; or by taking a boat, if the visitor mean to extend his excursion further. This interesting spot is of a semicircular shape, and is edged by a margin of limestone pebbles, behind which is a little plain, sown with green corn and flax: the plain is surrounded by rocks, and nothing can exceed the beauty of the verdure creeping through the rocky crevices, with the profusion of wild flowers that spring up in every sunny spot where they can take root. The shore is very shelving, and if a boat were urged by strong rowers, the effect produced would, according to Mr. Goodison, be almost exactly similar to the arrival of the Phœacian boat as described in the *Odyssey*. At the northern angle of the bay of Dexia are the remains of an immense cave, with the marks of the chisel still existing in the face of the rock: the roof has been destroyed, for the purpose of appropriating the stones for building at Vathi. Part of the southern entrance, which, according to Homer, was set apart for the gods, is still to be seen, and the site of that from the north, which was torn away probably with the roof in blasting the rock, may be readily supplied by fancy.

But it would speedily swallow up the little space we have left, if we were to dwell on the remains of antiquity at Ithaca: we must therefore take leave of this island, and proceed to the last of the group which we have yet to describe, viz.

SANTA MAURA, OR LEUCADIA.

LEUCADIA was the name belonging to this island in ancient times, but the Venetians gave it that of *Santa Maura*. Its length is about thirty miles, and breadth about twelve, and it is almost close to the continent of Greece. The island consists of a chain of mountains, composed of calcareous rock, which terminates at the south-west in the bold promontory of Cape Ducato, the celebrated leap of Sappho, of whom poets have sung. Some parts of the mountain-chain reach an elevation of 3000 feet.

There are no considerable rivers in the island, but the fountains and wells are both numerous and good; and the town is supplied very plentifully with water, by means of an aqueduct, from a fountain about a league's distance, called Melagavrisi. A lake of stagnant water is annually formed in a valley about two leagues from the town, in a southerly direction, and which is surrounded by mountains. The lake is about a league in circumference: it begins to appear about the end of October, but by the end of the month of May the waters entirely drain off, leaving a very fertile plain of alluvial soil. There is also a salt-water lake, or lagoon, of a remarkable kind. An isthmus, about three miles broad, springs from the north-eastern foot of the chain of mountains, and extends for about four or five miles in a direction towards the mainland of Greece, until at length it terminates in a narrow slip which runs parallel to the mainland of the island for nearly half a mile, at a distance not exceeding three hundred feet from it. The Corinthians cut across this isthmus at the point of its connexion with the mainland. This cut, although originally sufficient to admit of the passage of ships, has long since been nearly filled up with mud and calcareous detritus, brought round by the action of the wind upon the rocky bases of the mountains. The depth of the water in the lagoon is stated by Dr. Hennen to be from three feet to six inches, with an extent of surface about six or eight square miles. The borders of the lagoon afford several shallow spots conveniently circumstanced for the manufacture of salt, by the process of evaporation by the heat of the sun. Five or six hundred persons are engaged in this occupation.

The island is very subject to earthquakes. In one which occurred in 1820, as described by Mr. Lavens, there were sixty-three severe shocks between the 12th of February and the 31st of March, which placed in ruins about seventy houses in the town, and left most of the others in a tottering condition. During this period there were also about eight hundred slight shocks, and sometimes the earth continued trembling

for the space of *twelve or fourteen hours together*, without any perceptible cessation. The inhabitants of the town were in a deplorable condition all this time, being obliged to seek shelter in miserable huts of temporary construction, not venturing to sleep in their houses for upwards of two months, fearing the shocks would increase in violence; and the minds of the superstitious were kept in a constant state of alarm and agitation by ridiculous prophecies from time to time in circulation, that the town was to be totally destroyed.

The roads and communications from one part of the island to another are gradually improving under the care of the British residents. The communication between the fortress and the town is effected by boats, and also, in a curious manner, by means of the remains of an old aqueduct. The conduit or channel through which the water flowed is covered with smooth stones, and is about three feet broad, so as to admit of the passage of one person along it. It was erected by order of the emperor Bajazet. It is upwards of half a mile in length, and is raised on 370 arches. It is no longer used as an aqueduct.

The population of Santa Maura amounts to about sixteen thousand, who dwell in the town of Amaxichi, and in thirty-two inconsiderable villages scattered throughout the island. Amaxichi is somewhat more than a mile in circumference, containing about fourteen hundred houses, and six thousand inhabitants. It is rather a poor town, wood being the principal material of the houses. There is one tolerable street running its whole length, and, at its broadest part, about fifteen feet wide; but the other streets are mean, narrow, irregular, and dirty. The butchers expose their meat in the streets, as also do the vendors of bread, fruit, and vegetables, there being no regular market for those articles. A new fish-market is, however, built near the water's edge, where fish in great abundance and of excellent quality can be procured. The mode of fishing in the lagoon, as described by Mr. Goodison, is singular. As the water is seldom more than two feet and a half deep, the fish are enclosed in large spaces, by means of moveable wickers, chiefly made of canes, which are fixed upright in the soft bottom of the lake. These spaces are contracted at pleasure, and the fish thus preserved are gradually captured. The fishermen make use of a small canoe upon the lake, which draws but a few inches of water, called *monoxylon:* it is hollowed out, as the name imports, of one piece of wood. Sometimes the fish have perished in the winter season, from the lake having been frozen over. The principal kinds of fish are mullet, soles, eels, shrimps, crabs, and cockles.

It is a great bane attendant on the peculiar rites of the Greek church, that a considerable portion of the year is devoted by the inhabitants of Santa Maura either to feasting or to idleness, on account of the preposterous number of saints which they have crowded into their calendar. Mr. Goodison states that there are upwards of two hundred days in each year, for which religious duties furnish an exclusive privilege of exemption from all other avocations. The occurrence of a grand festival is sufficient to suspend the most necessary labour: the vintage, the gathering of salt or olives, is immediately abandoned upon these occasions, although impending destruction threatens the whole produce of the year, in the unexpected fall of a single night's rain.

The highest village in the island is called Engluvi. It lies in the bottom of a sort of cup-shaped cavity or hollow, formed by a cluster of peaks of the mountain which surrounds it. There is, however, an opening to the north-west, by which the inhabitants enjoy the full benefit of the breeze, which almost constantly descends upon them during hot weather. There are about one hundred and twenty houses, and it is reckoned a cool and healthy village. The water is excellent, and one of the natives, in an excess of enthusiasm at its merits, declared to Mr. Goodison that a pound of it is *lighter by several ounces* than a pound of any other water.

Behind the town of Amaxichi is a beautiful plain, two miles in length, nearly covered with a magnificent wood of olive trees. The wood is intersected by two or three good roads, which, from their straightness and the dark shade thrown on them by the tall olives, remind our English visitor of one of the fine avenues belonging to the old country seats in his own country.

We will here conclude our description of the Ionian Islands with a few words on the physical conformation of the inhabitants. The Ionians, in most respects, resemble the Greeks; the upper and front parts of the skull are well developed; the features are in general pleasing, and wear an air of intelligence; the complexion in healthy persons inclines towards olive, and in some of the females who are not exposed to the sun it is clear and white. The complexion of the peasantry, of course, is much affected by the sun; the eyes are almost universally brilliant and full in both sexes, and generally dark coloured.

NUTS AND NUTTING. II.

Nay gather not that filbert, Nicholas,
There is a maggot there,—it is his house,—
His castle,—oh, commit no burglary!
Strip him not naked,—'tis his clothes, his shell,
His bones, the case and armour of his life,
And thou shalt do no murder, Nicholas!
It were an easy thing to crack that nut,
Or with thy crackers, or thy double teeth,
So easily may all things be destroyed!
But 'tis not in the power of mortal man
To mend the fracture of a filbert-shell.—SOUTHEY.

MUCH as the common hazel-nut is sought for and valued by those who visit the cool shade of woods and copses at this season of the year, it is very inferior to some of the cultivated varieties to which the familiar term *filbert* is applied. Filberts possess a milder flavour, contain less oil, and are therefore more wholesome than common nuts. The word *filbert* or *filberd* (according to Richardson) exists in no other language than the English; the origin assigned to it by Gower is not very probable, since our ancestors alone are not likely to have given the tree a classical name.

. . . . . Phillis
Was shape into a nutte tree,
That all men it might see;
And after Phillis, Philberd
The tree was cleped in the yerd.—GOWER.

Another origin (of as little value) is given by Peacham in his *Emblems*, 1612. He is describing an English fruit-garden:

The Persian peach and fruitful quince,
And there the forward almond grew,
With cherries known no long time since;
The winter warden, orchard's pride,
The PHILIBERT that loves the vale,
And red queen apple, so envide
Of school-boys passing by the pale.

Upon this he observes, in a note, "The *filbert*, so named from PHILIBERT, a king of France, who caused by arte sundry kinds to be brought forth." Some suppose the original name to have been *Full-beard*, in allusion to the long calyx or husk which envelops the fruit.

There are eight or nine varieties of filbert in cul-

tivation; the general name of filbert being applied, not merely to the fruit commonly known by that title, distinguished by its long enveloping husks, but also to the kinds known as *Cob-nut, Bond-nut, Large square Downton*, &c. Filbert-trees are common in almost every garden, but about Maidstone, and in other parts of Kent, they are planted very extensively. Fields of many acres in extent are planted with them, and generally yield a remunerating crop. The soil in which filberts are planted should be loamy, on a dry sub-soil, and should receive a fresh dressing every second year, with a small quantity of manure. The most successful methods of propagation are, for dwarf trees, layering and grafting, and for strong plants, raising by suckers. If dwarf trees are required, layering is performed in the early part of the season, that the plants may become well rooted before autumn, when they are placed out in a nursery, or where they are intended to remain. The method of pruning is to cut down the layer to within a foot and a half of the ground, and carefully to remove any suckers which may appear at the bottom, that they may not draw away the nourishment from the principal stem. Twelve inches of the stem from the root upwards, must be kept quite free from shoots, the remaining six inches being sufficient to produce a good *head* to the tree. To the formation of this head particular attention must be paid. The buds at the top generally shoot forth with great vigour, but even these must not all be preserved. Eight or ten shoots are sufficient to form the head, and these must be carefully trained outwards; at first in a direction nearly horizontal, in which they may be easily kept by placing a hoop of proper size within them, and tying each shoot to the hoop at equal distances, in the form of a star. Afterwards, these shoots may be allowed to grow in an upward direction, so that the form of the young tree becomes that of a large bowl or basin, the central part being carefully cleared of branches, and the buds being only allowed to shoot forth on the exterior.

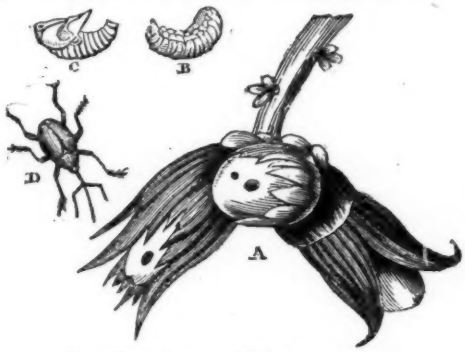
The admission of air and light to the central parts of the tree, which is promoted by this method of pruning and training, materially improves the healthfulness and fruitfulness of the branches; but after the tree has gained the desired form there are many niceties to be attended to, in retaining all the short fruitful spurs produced on the branches, cutting back the lateral shoots which arise from the same, &c. By a skilful management of the tree, and a judicious method of pruning, an abundant supply of fruit may be obtained for a great number of years.

The degree of care and attention requisite for keeping the trees in the state we have described is not likely to be bestowed on large plantations of filberts, unless where, as in some of the grounds of Kent, it is the aim of the cultivators to produce the largest quantity possible of fruit within a certain extent, and where, it is affirmed, the product of a single acre has sometimes been thirty hundred-weight of fruit. In private gardens, where neatness of appearance is desirable, this method of training may be used with much advantage.

In gathering this excellent fruit, we are often disappointed to find that numbers of the nuts are rendered useless to us, by the presence of a small white maggot, gaining its nourishment from the kernel, and living most luxuriously on its sweet food. In a poem called *the Filbert* (to which we are indebted for our motto to the present article,) Mr. Southey has amusingly represented the snug estate of this little worm. After glancing at some of the dangers to which it is exposed from the attacks of the mouse, the nuthatch, and the squirrel, (though the latter animal is too sagacious often to make the mistake of cracking an unsound nut,) he proceeds thus:–

> Man also hath his dangers and his foes,
> As this poor maggot hath; and when I muse
> Upon the aches, anxieties, and fears,
> The maggot knows not, Nicholas, methinks
> It were a happy metamorphosis
> To be enkernel'd thus: never to hear
> Of wars, and of invasions, and of plots;
> To feel no motion but the wind that shook
> The Filbert-tree, and rock'd us to our rest;
> And in the middle of such exquisite food
> To live luxurious! The perfection this
> Of snugness! It were to unite at once
> Hermit retirement, Aldermanic bliss,
> And Stoic independence of mankind.

We shall now proceed to give some account of the origin and transformations of this little grub.



THE NUT WEEVIL, (*Balininus nucum.*)

A. Filberts perforated by the nut-weevil.
B. The larva.—C. The pupa.
D. The perfect insect, represented somewhat larger than the natural size.

The parent insect, called the *nut-weevil*, (*Balininus nucum**) belongs to a genus of coleopterous insects, the species of which are all furnished with a long and slender rostrum, or beak, provided at the extremity with a very minute pair of horizontal jaws: this singular instrument is sometimes nearly equal in length to the body of the insect itself, as in the case of the present species, the nut-weevil. This insect is about a quarter of an inch in length, and of a dull brown colour; it makes use of the beak in question to perforate the shells of nuts, when in their young and soft state, for the purpose of depositing its eggs. The mother weevil has been observed, about the beginning of August, eagerly running over the bushes, and seeking a place to commence operations. She has never been found to choose a nut in which another insect had previously laid an egg, but selecting fruit that is yet unattacked, she drills a hole with her horny beak, and introduces a single egg, of a brown colour. The nut is but little injured by this operation, and continues to grow and ripen. In about a fortnight from the time of its introduction the egg is hatched, and the young larva commences feeding on the soft internal parts of the shell, allowing the kernel to grow and attain its full size ere he begins to attack it. By this remarkable arrangement the life of the insect is preserved, and the kernel, being the last part which it attacks, affords food for the grub during the whole time required for the attainment of its full growth.

When the nut becomes ripe and falls to the ground, in September or October, the grub makes its escape by gnawing a hole in the shell, or by enlarging that which had been previously made by the parent insect. It immediately burrows in the ground, but does not

* This insect is otherwise called *Curculio nucum, Phynchænus nucum, Nut-beetle.*

change into the pupa state till the following summer. Rösel adopted the following method of observing the transformations of the insect. He took some grubs, as they emerged from the nut, and placed them at the beginning of winter in glasses half filled with earth, covered with green turf. They all immediately dug down into the earth, remained there all the winter, and did not change into pupæ till the following June: the perfect insects appeared from the first of August till about the twentieth.

The mistakes occasionally made in poetry respecting the habits of different insects are extremely annoying to the entomologist. On this subject Kirby and Spence have the following passage:—

The gratification which the entomologist derives from seeing his favourite study adorned with the graces of poetry is seldom unalloyed with pain, arising from the inaccurate knowledge of the subject in the poet. Dr. Darwin's description of the beetle to which the nut-maggot is transformed may delight him (at least if he be an admirer of the Darwinian style) as he reads for the first time,—

> So sleeps in silence the *Curculio*, shut
> In the dark chamber of the cavern'd nut;
> Erodes with ivory beak the vaulted shell,
> And quits on filmy wings its narrow cell.

But when the music of the lines has allowed him room for a pause, and he recollects that they are built wholly upon an incorrect supposition, the Curculio never inhabiting the nut in its beetle shape, nor employing its ivory beak upon it, but undergoing its transformation underground, he feels disappointed that the passage has not truth, as well as sound.

We have mentioned the *nuthatch* as being one of the enemies threatening the existence of the nut-maggot, and as perchance some of our young readers may have heard its peculiar tappings during their nutting excursions, without ever being able to get a sight of its form, as it glided about among the higher branches of the trees, we present them with a description of this pretty little bird.

To those who value the productions of the different varieties of nut-trees, and wish to retain the fruit as long as possible in a perfect state, it may not be uninteresting to give a few directions for keeping it during the winter season. Let the fruit be perfectly ripe ere it be gathered from the tree, and let it remain for a day or two spread out on a shelf or floor in an airy room, that any moisture which may remain about the shells may be thoroughly dried up. Then place the nuts in earthen jars in a cold but dry place, covering the surface with a layer of dry sand. This will prevent the nuts from becoming shrivelled, owing to the evaporation of their moisture, and on the other hand will preserve them from the mouldiness and unpleasantness of flavour, which often follows upon their being gathered too soon, or kept in a damp situation.

He was still the listless, passionless creature, that suffering of mind and body had left him.

We call this a state of childishness, but it is the same poor hollow mockery of it that death is of sleep. Where, in the dull eyes of doting men, are the laughing light and life of childhood, the gaiety that has known no check, the frankness that has felt no chill, the hope that has never withered, the joys that fade in blossoming? Where, in the sharp lineaments of rigid and unsightly death, is the calm beauty of slumber; telling of rest for the waking hours that are past, and gentle hopes and loves for those which are to come? Lay death and sleep down, side by side, and say who shall find the two akin. Send forth the child and childish man together, and blush for the pride that libels our own old happy state, and gives its title to an ugly and distorted image.——Dickens.

Life is a shadow that departeth, a dream of error, the fruitless labour of imagined existence.—Russian Funeral Service.

THE NUTHATCH, (*Sitta Europæa.*)

The common nuthatch is remarkable for its activity and expertness in climbing, or rather in gliding about the branches of trees in search of its peculiar food. As a British bird it is confined to the south of England, where it remains during the whole year. It is bold and fearless in its habits, and may frequently be seen on trees in the immediate vicinity of dwellings. This interesting little bird exhibits much adroitness in the formation of its nest, and in the means it employs for procuring food.

The length of the nuthatch is about six inches, including the bill, which is three quarters of an inch in length, slender, but firm in its texture, and stiff, by both mandibles being curved. The feet are furnished with very strong claws. The colour of the back and head is blueish gray: the lower mandible and throat are white, shown off by a black streak, which extends from the gape to the neck; the sides and thighs are brown-orange; the two middle tail-feathers are gray; the others black, with a white spot and ash-gray tips.

The food of this bird consists of the kernels of nuts, of insects, and seeds: the tapping noise which it makes with its bill, and by which it attracts our attention, as we pass near the tree on which it works, proceeds from its efforts to break the shell of a nut, which it first places very cleverly in a crevice of the bark, and then hammers at with great perseverance until it has extracted the kernel. To this end it not only makes use of its strong bill, but, grasping the branch with its claws, which are admirably fitted for the purpose, it throws the full force of its head, beak, and body into the blow, and soon succeeds in breaking the shell in pieces. If, during these efforts, the nut should slip aside, or fall from the tree, the little creature instantly replaces it, and commences anew his attack. It is said that the motion of the bird is so swift as to catch the falling nut ere it reaches the ground.

The nuthatch chooses some natural hole in a tree as its place of nidification, or if such cannot readily be found it excavates one for itself. The deserted habitations of wood-peckers are frequently taken possession of by these birds, and made to suit their purpose. When they form their own nests, they invariably make the entrance so small that it will not admit any larger bird; when they make use of a ready-made nest, they build up a wall of clay at the entrance, so as to suit their own dimensions. This clay is kneaded very dexterously, and if too soft for the purpose, is strengthened and made more consistent by the intermixture of small stones. If the clay barrier be broken down, or injured, before the process of incubation is completed, the birds immediately repair it. The nest is lined with dead leaves, generally those of the oak, which are heaped

together without much order. The eggs are six or seven in number, white, spotted with rust-colour. The female is a very determined *sitter*, and menaces with bill and wings any one offering to interrupt her in her task, making at the same time a loud hissing noise like a serpent. If this method of defence proves ineffectual, she suffers herself to be taken captive, rather than desert her charge.

As these birds have no song, they are seldom kept in confinement, or if so, it is merely for the sake of observing their peculiar method of working. Bechstein gives an instance of their being partially tamed in a free state. During a very severe winter a lady amused herself with feeding a number of small birds on the terrace beneath her window. They soon became accustomed to her, and at the clapping of her hands, which was the signal made use of, would come in crowds to partake of the different kinds of seeds which she distributed among them. She put some hemp-seed and cracked nuts on the window-sill, and on a board, particularly for her favourites, the blue-tits. Two nuthatches came one day to have their share of this repast, and were so pleased that they became quite familiar, and did not even go away in the following spring to get their natural food, and to build their nest in the wood. They settled themselves in the hollow of an old tree near the house: as soon as the two young ones which they reared there were able to fly, they brought them to the hospitable window where they were to be nourished, and soon after disappeared entirely. It was very amusing to see these two new visitors hang or climb on the wall or blinds, whilst their benefactress put their food on the board. These pretty creatures, as well as the tits, knew her so well, that when she drove away the sparrows which came to steal what was not intended for them, they did not fly away also, but seemed to know that what was done was only for their defence and protection. This fact is sufficient to convince us that the nuthatch is not untameable, though when confined within a cage, its efforts are so persevering and energetic to reagin its liberty, that it seems impossible to divert it from its task, or by any means to reconcile it to its cage.

One of these birds, accidentally wounded by a sportsman, was placed in a small cage of plain oak-wood and wire. He ate and drank freely of the food given to him (which consisted of minced chicken, bread-crumbs, and water,) thereby proving that he was not alarmed at his state of confinement; yet the efforts he made to escape were most extraordinary: during a night and day that his imprisonment lasted, he carried on his work of battering down the frame of his cage, spending most of his strength on the corner pillars, which he reduced in that short space of time to the appearance of old and worm-eaten timber. By the perpetual application of his beak he unloosed a double knot of string with which the door of his cage had been fastened, and when hindered from escaping in that direction, he would try the size of the hole left as a drinking-place, and seek to extract the ends of the wire from the place where they were rooted in the wood, making use of his beak as a sort of pick-axe. His hammering was peculiarly laborious, for he did not perch, as other birds do, but grasping his hold with his large feet, he turned upon them as upon a pivot, and struck with the whole weight of his body, thus assuming the appearance, with his entire form, of the head of a hammer. These excessive exertions caused the death of the poor bird, after a night and day's confinement, and it is hoped that the account of its anxiety and impatience under such circumstances will deter our young readers from attempting to keep a nuthatch in a cage.

The common nuthatch is the only one found in Europe, but there are others in America and in the eastern Asiatic islands. The habits of all these birds are very similar, and their expertness in climbing is everywhere remarkable.

The Carolina, or white-breasted nuthatch, (*Sitta melanocephala,*) differs much in the colour of its plumage, and is considered by some naturalists as a distinct and separate species from the European. The upper parts of the head, neck, and shoulders, are deep black, glossed with green; the breast and belly pure white; the lower parts of the thighs rust-colour. The nest of this bird is placed in the hole of a tree, in the hollow rail of a fence, or some similar situation. The eggs are laid early in April, and are five in number, of a dull white, spotted with brown. The male supplies the female with food during the time she is sitting, seldom rambles far from the nest, and on the approach of danger, regardless of his own safety, flies instantly to alarm her. This species of nuthatch is common almost everywhere in the woods of North America, and may frequently be seen moving upwards and downwards in a spiral direction around the body and larger branches of trees, probing behind the scaly bark, and shelling off considerable pieces in his search after spiders, ants, insects and their larvæ. Mr. Wilson represents this little creature as possessing a degree of curiosity not common in many birds, frequently descending very silently within a few feet of the root of the tree where you happen to stand, stooping, head downwards, stretching out his neck in a horizontal position, as if to reconnoitre your appearance; and after several minutes' silent observation, again mounting with fresh activity, and piping his peculiar note of *quank, quank*, as before. Strongly attached to his native forests, he seldom forsakes them; and amidst the rigours of the severest winter weather, his note is still heard in the bleak leafless woods and among the howling branches. Sometimes the rain, freezing as it falls, encloses every twig, and even the trunk of a tree, in a hard, transparent coat, or shell of ice. On these occasions, the nuthatch may be heard plaintively expressing his anxiety and dissatisfaction at being with difficulty able to make his way along the smooth surface. He is frequently obliged to abandon the ice-bound tree, and approach out-houses, stables, and barns, examining rafters and beams, and picking up a subsistence on insects, grain, or anything else he can find.

There is a small species of nuthatch, called the red-bellied, black-capped nuthatch, (*Sitta varia,*) which breeds in the northern States of America, and migrates to the southern States during the winter months. It corresponds in the colour of the back and tail feathers, and in the form of the bill, nostrils, and tongue, with the species last mentioned. The breast and belly are reddish brown, and the head is deep black on the upper part. This bird is only four inches and a half long, and eight inches across the expanded wings. It is a useful little creature, being, in common with the rest of the tribe, a great devourer of insects and larvæ.

The brown-headed nuthatch, (*Sitta pusilla,*) is another American species, much resembling the last, but still smaller in size, seldom exceeding four inches and a quarter in length. The voice of this bird is more shrill than in the other species, and it appears to have more of a social character than the *Sitta varia*. It is exceedingly active and vigilant, so that specimens of it are very difficult to be obtained.

Nuthatches likewise occur in Jamaica and other

islands of America, but the accounts received of them have not been sufficiently precise to allow of its being determined whether they constitute separate species, or belong to the American ones already described.

In the forests of Sumatra, Java, and various other eastern islands is found a species of nuthatch which far exceeds in the beauty of its colouring the European or any of the American species. This is the violaceous nuthatch, (*Sitta frontalis*,) having the head, nape, and upper parts of a rich azure, the sides of the neck and cheeks purplish-blue, a distinct black band across the forehead, (from which the specific name is given,) and another along each eye. The quill and tail feathers are blue, mingled with ash-colour; the chin white; the rest of the under part pale and clouded with purple; the naked parts of the feet brown; and the bill yellow at the greater part of its length, but black at the tip. Some specimens of this genus have been brought from New Holland, which are different in colour, but also very beautiful.

It is supposed that in the extensive forests of America, as well as of the East, many other species of nuthatch and of other tree-birds yet remain unknown.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN AFFLICTION,

By Andrew Marvell: *born* 1620, *died* 1678.

Honoured Sir,

Having a great esteem and affection for you, and the grateful memory of him that is departed being still green and fresh upon my spirit, I cannot forbear to inquire how you have stood the second shock, at your sad meeting of friends in the country. I know that the very sight of those who have been witnesses of our better fortune doth but serve to reinforce a calamity. I know the contagion of grief, and infection of tears; and especially when it runs in a blood. And I myself could sooner imitate than blame those innocent relentings of nature, so that they spring from tenderness only, and humanity, not from an implacable sorrow. The tears of a family may flow together like those little drops that compact the rainbow, and if they be placed with the same advantage towards heaven, as those are to the sun, they too have their splendour; and like that bow, while they unbend into seasonable showers, yet they promise that there shall not be a second flood. But the dissoluteness of grief—the prodigality of sorrow—is neither to be indulged in a man's self, nor complied with in others. Tho' an only son be inestimable, yet it is like Jonah's sin to be angry at God for the withering of his gourd. He that gave his own son, may he not take ours? It is pride that makes a rebel; and nothing but the overweening of ourselves, and our own things, that raises us against Divine Providence. Whereas, Abraham's obedience was better than sacrifice. And if God pleases to accept both, it is indeed a farther trial, but a greater honour. 'Tis true, it is a hard task to learn and teach at the same time. And where yourselves are the experiment, it is as if a man should dissect his own body, and read the anatomy lecture.

Our fathers find their graves in our short memories, and sadly tell us how we may be buried in our survivors.—Sir Thomas Brown.

Let us carry into the world neither curiosity nor indiscretion. Curiosity is the defect of a little mind, which, not knowing how to employ itself at home, feels the necessity of being amused with the occupations of others. In relation to minute objects it is ridiculous. In important affairs it becomes odious. Let us know nothing about those debates, piques, and parties, which it is not in our power to settle.

THE DRAGON-FLY, (*Libellulina.*)

The beautiful insects commonly called dragon-flies are among the most brilliant productions of summer. Hovering about the neighbourhood of ditches and streams, flying with a rapid motion in pursuit of their prey, they must be familiar to most persons accustomed to country life. They form the genus *Libellula* of Linnæus, and belong to the order Neuropteræ, or veiny-winged insects*. All these insects have long, slender, cylindrical bodies, often variegated with beautiful colouring: the wings are transparent, strengthened by numerous black fibres, and having a strongly iridiscent appearance, as the light plays on them. They are very powerful in their flight, and possess the faculty of flying backwards and forwards without turning. Some of them always rest with wings expanded, ready on the slightest alarm to dart off from the spot where they had settled: others remain at rest with their wings in an erect position. It is very difficult to take these insects in the middle of the day: they are then watchful and alert, and move about with such extreme rapidity as to foil the attempts made to secure them. During the morning and evening hours they are more easily taken, being then in a comparatively inert state.

The under lip of the common dragon-fly, when in its larva state, is furnished with an apparatus which is described by Kirby and Spence, as forming "one of the most remarkable of prehensile instruments, in which the art and skill of a divine mechanician are singularly conspicuous, and which appears to be without a parallel in the insect world." This lip is the largest organ of the mouth, which when closed it entirely conceals; and with this lip, together with the assistance of a singular pair of jaws, the animal not only retains, but seizes its prey. A comparison made by Reaumur between the lip of this insect, and that of a human being is something to the following effect. We are to conceive our under-lip to be horny instead of fleshy, and stretching perpendicularly downward so as to cover the chin, then expanding into a triangular convex plate, attached by a joint so as to bend again upwards, and cover the mouth and cheeks as high as the nose—we are to fancy two other convex plates attached to this last mentioned one, so broad as to cover the whole nose and temples, opening like a pair of jaws, so as to expose the nose and mouth, and having their inner edges sharpened into teeth or spines, or armed with long claws,—if we can imagine such a strange mask attached to our own face, we may then form some idea of the remarkable apparatus which covers the fore-part of the head of this insect.

You will probably admit (say our first-mentioned authors,) that your own visage would present an appearance not very engaging while concealed by such a mask; but it would strike still more awe into the spectators, were they to see you first open the two upper jaw-like plates, which would project from each temple like the blinders of a horse; and next having, by means of the joint at your chin, let down the whole apparatus, and uncovered your face, employ them in seizing any food that presented itself, and carrying it to the mouth. Yet this procedure is that adopted by the larvæ provided with this strange organ.

We must now proceed to notice the various changes through which the common dragon-fly passes in arriving at the perfect state. The female drops her eggs into the water, which after a certain period are hatched into flattish larvæ or caterpillars, having six legs. These are of a dull brown colour, and of a singular and very disagreeable aspect, altogether opposed

* The insects of this order have four membranaceous, transparent, naked wings, in which the membranes cross each other so as to appear like net-work. The tail has no sting, but, in many of the individuals, is furnished with appendices like pincers, by which the males are distinguished.

to the brilliancy and beauty of the perfect insect. They cast their skins several times before they come to their full size. The legs are more used by the insect for the capture of its prey than for the purposes of motion. The mask-like appendage above described renders it a formidable enemy to the smaller water-insects, and ministers to the supply of its voracious appetite. It does not spring suddenly on its prey, but steals slowly on them, and by a sudden evolution of the jaw takes them by surprise.

In the larva, as well as in that which may be called the *chrysalis* state, these animals respire water by receiving and rejecting it at an aperture at the termination of their bodies. Although there is a necessity for this sort of respiration, so that the insect is distressed by being withdrawn from the water for a short time, yet the interior part of the body is well provided with air-tubes, and there are several small openings destined for the admission of air. By means of the apparatus by which the insect first receives and then pumps out the water, it is also aided in its motion, and at every current thus sent out, propelled through the water. A current is likewise formed around the insect in the direction of the mouth, and thus the small water-insects, and even minute fishes, become a more easy prey. From the larva state the insect approaches the pupa, or chrysalis, in which the only difference consists in the appearance of the rudiments of future wings, which are enveloped in short cases or processes on the back. In this state it remains for two years, and is very voracious.

Having attained its full size the insect undergoes its last transformation, and in preparation for this, it creeps up the stem of some water-plant, and after resting some time in the sunshine, it forcibly grasps the stem, and makes several efforts by which the skin of the head and back is gradually forced open, and the complete libellula emerges. At first the wings are weak and tender, and folded up into a narrow compass, from their having been compressed, during so long a period, within the scales on the back of the pupa, but in about half an hour, they become dry and fully expanded, and have acquired the strength and solidity necessary for flight. The insect then commences its aërial journeys, and is thenceforward as much dependent on air for its being and enjoyment as it formerly was on water.

We have already noticed the variety of colours in the perfect libellulæ. These have been observed to consist of different shades of green, blue, crimson, scarlet, and white, or, in some individuals, of most of these colours united. The gay and brilliant colouring of this race of insects has given rise to a variety of names, which are scarcely consistent with the predacious habits of the dragon-fly. These names are *Demoiselles* (damsels), *Virgo* (virgin), *Sponsa* (a bride), *Puella* (a girl), *Calepteryx* (pretty-wing.)

The particular species of dragon-fly to which our remarks are chiefly confined is the *Libellula varia*, or great dragon-fly, as being the most brilliant and conspicuous of British species. It makes its appearance in the vicinity of small streams and rivulets towards the decline of summer. It measures across the expanded wings about four inches: the head is very large, and is fixed to the thorax by a very slender neck: the eyes are of a blue colour, with a varying lustre, and occupy the greatest part of the head. The thorax is variegated with green, yellow, and black: the body, which is long, slender, and cylindrical, is black, with rich variegations of bright blue and grass-green. The wings are transparent, strengthened with numerous black reticulated fibres, and each marked with a black spot near the tip. The legs are black, and the tail is terminated by a pair of black forcipated processes, with an intermediate one of similar colour.

With regard to the structure and general economy of this insect, we cannot refrain from presenting to our readers the following admirable remarks of Mr. Newman:—

Nature, in the formation of her instruments, has always adopted the best size and best form. If her creatures wanted but to see, a globular eye floating in space might perhaps be the uniform character of the animal world; if to see and to eat, an eye and a mouth would be given; if to move swiftly in the air were desirable, wings must be supplied; if on earth, legs must be added; if in the water, fins. To carry all these organs, and to contain muscle to guide and govern them, a body must be added. Each part of the body will be of the best size, and best form for the functions it has to perform. Observe the *dragon-fly*, the emperor of his tribe: his wings rustle as he hovers stationary and hawk-like in the air; his appetite is insatiable; his food the active occupants of his own element. It is given to him in charge to set bounds to the increase of the insect race: he beholds his prey afar off; he darts on it like the rapidity of a lightning flash: to devour it ere life is departed is the work of an instant: he sails round and round; he soars up and down. When the sky is serene he seeks his prey, like the swallows, almost beyond the reach of human sight. What organs does such an animal require? Are they not these eyes, mouth, and wings? How has nature provided for his wants? Regard his head —below, it is all mouth; above, it is one continuous eye. Contemplate his wings—their character is strength and activity, power and lightness. His body is slender and graceful: like a rudder, it serves as an instrument wherewith to shape his course. Feelers would be comparatively useless to an animal whose dependence for support is on the keenness of its vision and the velocity of its flight. We find them but little prominent—his every organ of the required size. There is truly a best form, and a best size, and nature provides both.

THE DRAGON-FLY.

IT was the violet which induced John Bertram, a Quaker of Pennsylvania, to study plants. He had employed his time in agricultural pursuits without a knowledge of botany, but being in the field one day, he gathered a violet, examined its formation, and reflected upon it until he became so prepossessed with the flower that he dreamed of it. This circumstance inspired him with a desire of becoming acquainted with plants; he therefore learned for that purpose as much Latin as was necessary, and soon became the most learned botanist of the New World.—PHILLIPS.

IN spite of dulness, and in spite of wit,
If to thyself thou canst thyself acquit,
Rather stand up assured with conscious pride
Alone, than err with millions at thy side.

CHURCHILL.

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